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SUBJECT Disease and Preventive Measures in Hwanghae Province, North Korea

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Disease and Famine

1. During the period from June 1950 to March 1952, the incidence of disease and the resulting mortality rate in Kayon-myon, Sinch'on-gun (125-32, 38-24) (YC-2153), Hwanghae Province, was as follows:¹ recurrent fever, 20 percent of the population, with a 10 percent mortality rate among those affected; eruptive typhus, 40 percent of the population, with a 20 percent mortality rate; dysentery, 5 percent of the population, with a 10 percent mortality rate; smallpox, 0.2 percent of the population, with a 25 percent mortality rate; and tuberculosis, less than 0.3 percent of the population, with an undetermined mortality rate. In January 1952, 30 percent of the population of Kayon-myon had influenza, but there were believed to be no deaths from this disease. The incidence of these diseases was higher in March 1952 than during a normal year, but it was not as great as during March 1951. In March 1952, Sinch'on-gun had the highest incidence of these diseases in Hwanghae Province. By 31 March 1952, recurrent fever and eruptive typhus had spread over all of Hwanghae Province, and in So-myon, Ongjin-gun more than 60 men were afflicted. In Kayon-myon during March 1952, there was a famine and rice was selling for 4,800 North Korean won per small mal.²

Preventive Measures

2. Prior to 31 March 1952, the North Korean Department of Welfare had ordered all citizens of Hwanghae Province to have three weekly injections of a Soviet-made vaccine for immunization from cholera, the plague, tetanus, eruptive typhus, and intestinal typhus. A Chinese-made vaccine was also used for immunization from cholera, the plague, eruptive typhus, and intestinal typhus. These injections were required every 3 or 4 months.

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one occasion, in March 1951, Chinese and Soviet physicians gave small pox vaccinations in some parts of Hwanghae Province.

3. Prior to 31 March 1951, North Korean authorities ordered the destruction of all animals such as poultry, cats, and dogs, but the instructions were not obeyed. Rats, insects, and other pests could not be effectively eradicated because of insufficient pest-killing chemicals. The authorities ordered that all houses be kept clean and that all clothes be sterilized by steam or disinfectant. In order to travel, it was necessary to have a certificate of disinfection indicating these procedures had been carried out. These certificates were not issued to everyone who completed the disinfection process, however, but were issued at the discretion of the village chairmen to persons whose travel requests they approved.

Drugs

4. Most American medicines such as sulfadiazine, atabrine, and aspirin are smuggled into North Korea and are kept for emergency use only because of the short supply. Usually, penicillin, sulfadiazine, sulfaguanidine, streptomycin, dextrose, bicarbonate of soda, aspirin, quinine, and atabrine are easily obtained on the black market. Morphine tartrate, terpin hydrate, mercurochrome, saltonin, and chloromycetin are scarce on the black market. Chloromycetin and penicillin in oil costs 18,000 North Korean won per bottle and sulfadiazine costs from 80,000 to 100,000 North Korean won per pound. The most valuable medicines are imported from China and are strictly controlled by the North Korean government. Whenever these medicines were found on the market³ by governmental authorities, they were confiscated.

1. Comment. Statistics concerning Kayŏn-myŏn were compiled by individual doctors of the myŏn during their regular meetings.
2. Comment. According to another report from a different source, rice was a higher price than here given, selling for 7,000 won per small mal at markets in Hwanghae Province in mid-March 1952. One small mal is the equivalent of approximately one-quarter of one bushel or about 15 pounds of rice, and 1,000 North Korean won is equivalent to slightly less than 1 United States dollar.
3. Comment. Presumably this includes the open market as well as the black market.

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